

DPC Newsletter

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Updates: DPC and CBDA

DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION

Recreation Update — Commission staff is currently in the process of updating its inventory of land- and water-based recreation facilities in the Delta, which was compiled in 1997. Staff will be contacting marinas and other recreation service providers for assistance in this update.

Also, \$225,000 in grant funding from the Dept. of Boating and Waterways will be used to undertake a Delta Recreation Master Plan. Commission staff has drafted an RFP to consultants for completion of this work; the RFP will be released July 12, 2004.

CA Delta RC&D Council — To date, ten representatives from different local entities have signed on to participate in the formation of a new nonprofit group, the CA Delta Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council. RC&D is a national program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service, whereby a local nonprofit council is established to fund projects aimed at protecting and enhancing natural resources, as well as promoting the local economy, using a variety of grant funding sources. Staff of the Commission and San Joaquin County RCD have submitted the group's drafted Bylaws to the Secretary of State thereby reserving the Council's name, and are currently in the process of completing other nonprofit paperwork for the group. The first meeting of the group is anticipated to take place during the first two weeks of August, at which point officers will be selected and a two-year budget will be considered.

CA BAY-DELTA AUTHORITY

ERP Grants Approved — At its June 10, 2004 meeting, CBDA approved \$1.4 million in grant funding for three projects under its Ecosystem Restoration Program. The projects include an effort by the Dept. of Food and Agriculture to address a nonnative invasive weed, restoration of riparian habitat along the Sacramento River near Hamilton City, and an effort to control pepperweed in the Cosumnes River Preserve.

Revised Delta Improvements Package MOU— CBDA directed its staff to redraft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among various State and federal agencies regarding implementation of its proposed Delta Improvements Package. The revised MOU has been expanded from the version considered by CBDA on at its June 10 meeting, to include elements from various programs identified in the Bay-Delta Program's Record of Decision (August 2000). The new MOU will be considered by CBDA at its August meeting.

Mercury Strategy Adopted — CBDA formally adopted a strategy for integrating mercury research and activities into the implementation of its overall program. The mercury strategy is intended to help guide investments in research and monitoring, with the goal of understanding and ultimately reducing human and biotic exposure to mercury.

More information on these items, as well as other CBDA and agency news, can be found at www.calwater.ca.gov.

Update on Legislation of Interest

AB 2476 (Wolk): Delta Protection Commission — The most recent amendment to the bill (May 25) adds an additional five members to the current 19-member configuration of the Commission: the State Historic Preservation Officer (or designee), the public member of the CBDA, and three public members appointed by the Governor. The bill also requires DPC to identify lands in the Secondary Zone which, if developed, would impact the Primary Zone, and to review its resource management plan to identify growth pressures within the Primary Zone since 1993. AB 2476 will be heard in Senate Appropriations on August 2.

SB 86 (Machado): Delta Conservancy Program — Discussions on Machado's proposal to create a Delta Conservancy Program have resumed. SB 86 was most recently amended on June 16, 2004. The bill proposes creation of a Delta Conservancy Program, administered by the State Coastal Conservancy, to address agricultural, economic, natural, recreational, and urban waterfront resources. SB 86 was placed on the Assembly Appropriations Committee's suspense file on June 30, 2004.

More information on both of these bills, and all other bills under consideration, can be found online at www.leginfo.ca.gov.

Jones Tract Levee Breach Update

On Thursday, June 3, 2004, a levee breach along Middle River occurred on Upper Jones Tract, an agricultural island located about 20 miles west of Stockton. By the next day, flood waters had reached Lower Jones Tract as well, inundating a total of over 11,000 acres and causing a loss of nearly \$10 million in crop losses. Wind-generated waves began eroding the Trapper Slough levee, threatening inundation of Highway 4; the levee was quickly raised by six feet and armored with riprap. The cause of the breach has not yet been determined.

With the levee breach just recently being closed on June 30, the island is now in the process of being pumped dry; it is estimated that this could take up to 90 days. Once the land has been re-leveled and the debris cleared, it could be ready for planting by spring 2005. On Thursday, July 1, President Bush approved Governor Schwarzenegger's request for a major disaster declaration on the levee break. Under this declaration, the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will coordinate assistance efforts with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. The federal government will be covering 75 percent of the total eligible response and recovery costs associated with the levee breach, while State and local entities will make up the remaining 25 percent. Eligible State and local flood fight and repair costs are currently estimated at over \$40 million, but a closer assessment on necessary infrastructure repairs will be made once the floodwaters recede.

Commission Creates New Delta Land Use Impacts Committee

As a result of discussions over the last two years on the negative impacts of urban development occurring in and around the Delta, the Commission voted at its March 2004 meeting to create a new committee. The Delta Land Use Impacts Committee is charged with evaluating impacts of development in the Delta Secondary Zone on land uses in the Primary Zone, where the Commission has appeal authority over local government actions. Commission staff has been contacting local governments to determine the extent of development that has occurred in the Secondary Zone since the Commission was convened in 1993. Based

on feedback received to date, over 45,000 acres in the Legal Delta's Secondary Zone have been urbanized since 1993, creating over 100,000 new homes serviced by millions of square feet of new retail and office space uses. The majority of this development has occurred in San Joaquin County, most notably in Tracy, Lathrop, and Stockton and in the town of Mountain House. A significant amount of development has also occurred in West Sacramento (Yolo County).

The Committee will also be issuing recommendations on the Commission's procedures of reviewing and commenting on proposed projects in the Delta.

Cal Boating Fights Water Hyacinth in the Delta

Submitted by David Johnson, Deputy Director, CA Dept. of Boating and Waterways

The water hyacinth is a beautiful plant whose showy lavender flowers and glossy green leaves have made it a favorite in ornamental ponds.

It is also the fastest-growing plant known to science. Like something out of a scary movie, if left unchecked, a floating mass of these plants in an infested waterway can double its size within 7-10 days. Native to the Amazon region of South America, it has currently spread to more than 50 countries on five continents.

The CA Dept. of Boating and Waterways spends \$3 million a year to control the spread of this invasive, destructive aquatic pest in Northern California's Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and its tributaries.

The water hyacinth was introduced into the United States in 1884 at the Cotton States Exposition in New Orleans when display samples were distributed to visitors and extra plants were released into local waterways. By 1895, water hyacinth had spread across the Southeast and was growing in 40-kilometer-long mats that blocked navigation in the St. John's River in Florida. The plant was first reported in California in 1904 in a Yolo County slough. By 1981, water hyacinth covered 1,000 acres of the Delta, and 150 of its 700 miles of waterways.

Cal Boating began a herbicide control program under legislative mandate in 1983, after thick hyacinth mats clogged marinas and farm irrigation pumps and caused navigation hazards, affecting the area's agricultural and recreational industries. Herbicide spraying opened up water channels which had been closed by the hyacinth plant.

Boating and Waterways monitors water quality to ensure that herbicides do not exceed allowable limits, and that the spraying conducted in the Delta has had no adverse impacts on the environment, agriculture, or public health in the area.

A newer aquatic pest control program fights the spread of *Egeria densa*. Introduced to California more than 30 years ago, *Egeria densa*, or Brazilian elodea, is a submerged aquatic plant that forms dense mats of vegetation that obstruct navigation and recreation, slow water flows, plug agricultural irrigation pumps, and disrupt the natural ecosystem of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. *Egeria* is a popular plant used in aquariums, from which it may have been introduced to the waterways.

Cal Boating was authorized by legislation enacted in January 1997 to control *Egeria densa* in the Delta, its tributaries, and the Suisun Marsh, and now spends \$4 million annually to control this aquatic pest. The program to control both hyacinth and *Egeria* employs 15 field crew members in the Delta.

For more information about the Department of Boating and Waterways and its many boating safety, access, and environmental programs, please visit www.dbw.ca.gov.

Courtland to Host 32nd Annual Pear Fair on Sunday, July 25

The Delta town of Courtland is gearing up for its 32nd annual celebration of the Bartlett pear. Held every year on the last Sunday in July, Courtland's Pear Fair is the longest continually running agricultural fair in the State, and the only event in the country that is dedicated solely to the Bartlett Pear, one of the Delta's most prominent crops.

This year's event will feature many of the favorites from past festivals: a classic car show and parade culminating in the crowning of this year's "Pear Queen"; a "fun run" beginning at 8 a.m. on Sunday morning; and vendors on hand with a variety of food and beverage items, including pear pie, pear fritters, and pear cider. There will also be a pear "cook-off" featuring salad and dessert recipes. Live music performances will be held throughout the day.

Finally, there will be numerous fun activities for children, including pony rides, a petting zoo, a pear pie-eating contest, and even the opportunity to ride on the fire trucks of Courtland's volunteer fire department in the parade.

A parking fee of \$5 per vehicle covers admission to the fair for all persons riding in the vehicle. No parking will be allowed along Highway 160; any vehicle parked there is subject to being towed at the owner's expense.

More information on this year's Pear Fair activities, including a lineup of live music performances, can be found online at www.pearfair.com, or by calling (916) 775-2000.